

Message Text

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SUB: GHANA SUBVERSION TRAIL

REF: A) ACCRA 3800, B) ACCRA 3697, C) 75 ACCRA 8533,

1. SUMMARY: MILITARY TRIBUNAL JULY 28 FOUND SEVEN OF EIGHT COUP PLOTTERS GUILTY OF SUBVERSION, SENTENCING FIVE OF THEM TO DEATH BY FIRING SQUAD AND TWO OF THEM TO 20 AND 15 YEAR PRISON TERMS. THE EIGHT PLOTTER WAS FOUND NOT GUILTY AND RELEASED. THE EIGHT DEFENDANTS, SIX OF WHOM WERE EITHER ACTIVE OR RETIRED MILITARY MEN AND TWO OF WHOM WERE CIVILIANS, WERE ARRESTED NOVEMBER 1975, THEIR TRAIL STARTED MAY 1976. BASED ON PAST EXPERIENCE, IT IS UNLIKELY GOVERNMENT WILL CARRY OUT THE DEATH PENALTIES. END SUMMARY.

2. THE THREE MONTH MILITARY TRIAL OF EIGHT MEN- CAPT. K. TSIKATA (RETIRED), CAPT. G. BANINI, LT. V. LATZOO (RETIRED), W.O. CLASS 2 R. NYATEPEH, S/SGT G. AMEREKA, CPL. J. GBEDZE, F. AGBOADA, AND M. HAMENOO, ACCUSED OF SUBVERSION, CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT SUBVERSION AND CONCEALING SUBVERSION IN CONNECTION WITH A COUP PLANNED LAST NOVEMBER ENDED JULY 28 WITH THE SENTENCING OF TSIKATA, LATZOO, AMEREKA, NYATEPEH, AND AGBOADA TO DEATH BY FIRING SQUAD AND HAMENOO

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AND GBEDZE TO 20 AND 15 YEAR PRISON TERMS RESPECTIVELY.

BANINI WAS FOUND NOT GUILTY AND RELEASED AT PROSECUTION'S OWN SUGGESTION. THE EIGHT DEFENDANTS HAD BEEN ARRESTED NOVEMBER 1975. THEIR ALLEGED RINGLEADER, BRIG. A.K. KATTAH, A RETIRED ARMY OFFICER, AND ANOTHER CONFEDERATE, CPL. K. KWASHIGAH, ESCAPED ARREST (KATTAH IS IN TOGO AND THE OTHER MAN'S WHEREABOUTS ARE UNKNOWN).

3. DURING THE TRAIL, WHICH BEGAN MAY 19, 1976, THE GOVERNMENT DESCRIBED IN DETAIL THE STEPS TAKEN BY THE PLOTTERS IN PREPARATION FOR THEIR COUP. WHILE THE GOVERNMENT PRESENTED A CONVINCING CASE IN TERMS OF THE DEFENDANTS' GUILT, IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT THIS WAS ONE OF THE MOST INEPT BAND OF COUP PLOTTERS EVER ASSEMBLED ANYWHERE. THE WELLSPRING FOR THE PLOT WAS KATTAH'S DISPLEASURE AT BEING FORCED OUT OF THE ARMY AND NOT BEING GIVEN A POST COMMENSURATE WITH WHAT HE VIEWED AS HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE JANUARY 1972 COUP. THE PLOTTERS HAD NO BACKING IN THE MILITARY, LITTLE MONEY TO BUY ASSISTANCE, AND A RATHER PIECEMEAL, THOUGH BLOODY, PLAN FOR THE COUP ITSELF, WHICH, HAD THEY NOT BEEN ARRESTED, WOULD HAVE CERTAIN TO FAIL. WHILE MOST OF THE DEFENDANTS ARE EWES, THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT RAISE THEIR TRIBAL AFFILIATION DURING THE TRAIL.

4. KOFI AWOONOR, WHO WAS ARRESTED IN THE CASE BUT NOT PLACED ON TRIAL, TESTIFIED IN THE TRIAL'S CLOSING STAGES AS A DEFENSE WITNESS FOR CAPTAIN TSIKATA. IN THE COURSE OF HIS TESTIMONY HE ADMITTED KATTAH STAYED AT HIS HOUSE FOR A PERIOD OF ABOUT FIVE DAYS. IN HIS SUMMATION, THE PROSECUTOR SAID THAT AWOONOR HAD LIED ABOUT CERTAIN, UNSPECIFIED FACTS IN THE COURSE OF HIS TESTIMONY. AWOONOR'S CASE IS STILL PENDING AND HE MAY NOW BE FACED WITH A PERJURY CHARGE ALONG WITH THE CHARGE OF HARBORING A FUGITIVE (REF A).

5. IN THE PAST THE GOVERNMENT HAS COMMUTED THE DEATH SENTENCES OF CONVICTED COUP PLOTTERS WHEN NO ONE WAS HARMED IN THE PLOT. SINCE THIS COUP NEVER GOT OFF THE GROUND, IT IS LIKELY THAT THOSE GIVEN DEATH SENTENCES WILL HAVE THEM COMMUTED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT.

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